

## Klaesius, Erin

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**From:** audubon society [audubon@rain.org]  
**Sent:** Sunday, August 18, 2002 5:39 AM  
**To:** Klaesius, Erin  
**Cc:** mary@resources.ca.gov  
**Subject:** Amazing Snowy Plover Success Story

Erin Klaesius, State Biodiversity Council  
Mary Nichols, California Secretary for Resources

Dear Erin and Mary,

8.17.02

I respectfully ask your consideration for scheduling a brief presentation to (a future meeting of) the State Biodiversity Council by Dr. Christina Sandoval, Kendy Radasky, and Jennifer Stroh, on the amazing success of their Snowy Plover habitat restoration project at Coal Oil Point, UCSB West Campus, Santa Barbara.

Here's a win:win:win partnership of superior science, superior education of the public on ecological/ESA issues, while maintaining robust public access to beaches for active and passive recreation.

Taking a habitat area where the last confirmed successful breeding of the threatened Western Snowy Plover was over 25 years ago, they converted a small Plover "wintering" area into a well studied, well restored, year-round habitat where successful breeding has produced 23 new chicks in just the 2nd year of the active program, with over half (thus far) having successfully fledged.

Part of this was based on "good science" by Dr. Sandoval of the UC Ecological Reserve System's Coal Oil Point Preserve Project, and by Kevin Lafferty of the US Geological Survey, in superior data acquisition on the number, type, and intensity of disturbances to the Plovers in their coastal dunes wintering area.

This indicated that human, canine, equine "disturbances" averaged 3+ @ hour at the sites during daylight hours BEFORE preservation plans were implemented. In just the 2nd year, these have been reduced by over 80%, while keeping the beach open to year-round public access.

More "good science" by Dr. Sandoval, and volunteers from UCSB, Isla Vista Park District, the Audubon Society, and California Native Plant Society, led to their restoring large areas surrounding the Plover's dune area to native vegetation, thus removing ground cover from which predators could disturb or predate the Plover area.

Much of the project success was due to innovative public education, combined with community outreach, and effective compromise.

Numerous public outreach meetings with the greater community were held BEFORE habitat restoration commenced, or beach access by a trail meandering through the key habitat was re-routed around it.

Thus, public input was well integrated, AND key habitat areas preserved without restrictive fencing, or loss of public beach access.

Dr. Sandoval, Radasky, Stroh devised a way to segregate the main Plover habitat on the beach behind a single rope, hung from widely separated poles, with signs attached requesting public protection for the Plovers from disturbance or non-emergency human intrusions. Habitat education boards were installed along trails approaching the dunes.

This was followed by recruitment, scientific training, and effective deployment of a corps of over 60 volunteer docents, equipped with spotting scopes, printed materials, and binoculars, to educate users of a very heavily utilized public beach that demarks the boundary between Isla Vista and the UCSB West Campus, and the (new) City of Goleta. Such a large docent pool allowed Plover observation and habitat protection literally from dawn to dusk, seven days a week.

Unlike Plover habitats near Lompoc, or the Five Cities area of San Luis Obispo County, where multiple arrests, police (and even military) action were required to protect key habitat from severe disturbance, and numerous citations, fines and prosecutions resulted, Dr. Sandoval and her team were able to keep the IV/Coal Oil Point beach access OPEN for active and passive human recreation throughout the entire Plover breeding period, with virtually no reliance on law enforcement or the courts to protect the habitat or the Plovers.

In fact, the Project team deputized the Isla Vista and UCSB communities to

adopt  
stewardship for the area voluntarily, and to sustain it. Numerous  
elementary  
schools have visited the site, to study the tiny birds through the  
spotting  
scopes. Several have "adopted" the Plovers as school projects. This in  
itself is impressive, since the tiny Plovers are not what most people  
would  
consider to be  
a "marquee species" (i.e. Snowy Owl, Golden Eagle, Whale, Dolphin,  
etc.).

They have accomplished these things in less than 2 years, on a minimal  
budget.

Their success appears to put the lie to frequent, political claims that  
ESA  
projects and coastal recreation could NOT co-exist successfully in  
California.

Obviously there are more profound ecological and biodiversity issues  
that your  
Council must deal with each quarter. Yet I cannot help believing that it  
would  
be a good tonic to the Council to be able to receive a brief report from  
Dr.  
Sandoval, Radasky, Stroh, on how biodiversity values CAN yield visible  
success  
in populated areas even on minimal budget investment when they are part  
of  
solid  
programs, well managed, and underpinned by sound science.

IF you wish more information about this project or its principals,  
please  
do not  
hesitate to contact me: (805) 964-6477, or at this Email address.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Lee Moldaver,  
Vice-Chair,  
Audubon California